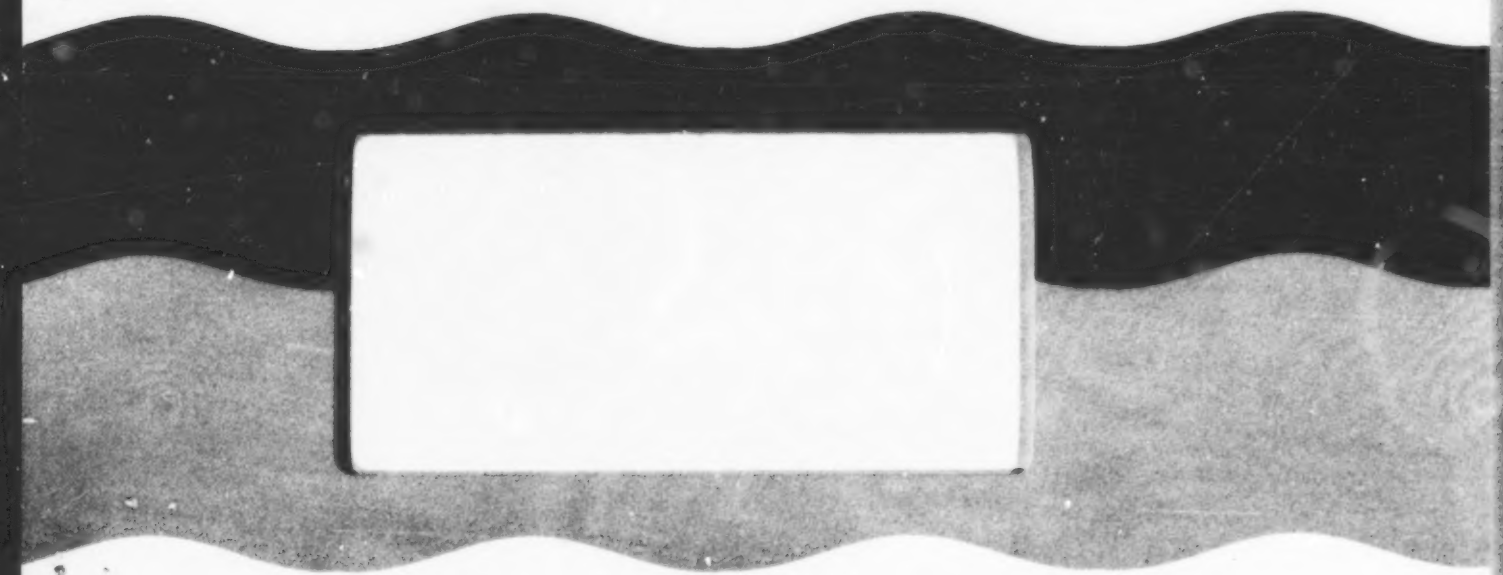
Transport Canada Transports Canada

TP 1624

Marine Casualty Investigations

Enquêtes sur les accidents maritimes



Investigation Report to the Minister pursuant to sections 542 or 545 of the Canada Shipping Act

Rapport d'investigation au Ministre conformément aux articles 542 ou 545 de la Loi sur la marine marchande du Canada

Canada

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING A FIRE INVOLVING THE CANADIAN FISHING VESSEL "NORTH SIDE" AND THE CANADIAN DIVING SUPPORT VESSEL "D-THUNDERBALL" AT PORT DOVER, ONTARIO, NOVEMBER 26, 1985.

REPORT No. 470

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REPORT OF INVESTIGATION INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING A FIRE INVOLVING THE CANADIAN FISHING VESSEL "NORTH SIDE" AND THE CANADIAN DIVING SUPPORT VESSEL "D-THUNDERBALL" AT PORT DOVER, ONTARIO, NOVEMBER 26, 1985.

Particulars of Vessels

Name	"NORTH SIDE"	"D-THUNDERBALL"
Official Number	172018	348591
Port of Registry	Port Dover	Port Dover
Call Sign	VX8119	VCQN
Gross Tonnage	22.55	54.86
Net Tonnage	15.33	37.30
Length Reg	16.67 m	18.81 m
Breadth	5.18 m	4.91 m
Depth	1.70 m	2.41 m
Draught	F: 1.37 m A: 1.83 m	F: 1.22 m A: 1.83 m
Type	Fishing Vessel	Diving Support Vessel
Built	Steel, Port Dover 1944	Steel, Loreauville, La U.S.A. 1966, Aluminum Superstructure
Propulsion	Diesel 174 bhp	Twin Screw Diesel 680 bhp
Cargo	None	None
Crew	3 (not on board)	6 (not on board)
Certification	Inland Waters Class I Great Lakes only	Inland Waters Class II Lake Erie
Owners	Ryerse Fisheries Ltd 200 Grace Street Port Dover, Ontario N0A 1N0	Pembina Resources Ltd 600-734, 7th Avenue SW Calgary, Alberta T2P 3P8

Background

Note: All times in this report are expressed in Eastern Standard Time (UTC minus 5 hours).

The "NORTH SIDE" was employed in the Lake Erie smelt fishery operating from Port Dover, Ontario, and had been fishing on November 25. After landing the catch, the vessel was secured port side to the finger berth. A member of the crew switched on the shore power to the block heater in the diesel engine and left the propane heater stove pilot flame burning. The doors were not locked when the last man left at about 1700.

During the night, the vessel caught fire and burned through its mooring ropes and drifted across the dock basin and ignited the diving support vessel "D-THUNDERBALL".

At about 0415, the flames were observed, and the Port Dover Volunteer Fire Department was called. They extinguished the fires and the two vessels remained afloat although they both suffered serious damage.

Narrative

On the afternoon of November 25, 1985 the "NORTH SIDE" landed her catch at Omstead's Fishery in Port Dover, then moved to her berth on the south east end of the second wharf from the east side of the East Basin.

She was secured port side to the berth by synthetic ropes, and an extension electric power cable was connected to the shore hydro power pedestal to supply electricity. The block heater for the diesel engine was connected to the shore power supply and two electric light bulbs were left burning. When the last man left at about 1700, the propane heater stove in the wheel-house was at its lowest setting 'pilot' with only the pilot flame alight. The doors to the wheel-house and engine-room were not locked as it had been found that locks do not deter thieves and vandals.

At about 0415 the next day, the crew of another vessel were driving near the dock and observed flames and explosions coming from vessels at the south wall of the East Basin.

Port Dover Volunteer Fire Department and Haldimand-Norfolk Regional Police were called by telephone. The Fire Department responded and fought the fire with water and foam.

The "NORTH SIDE" was lying alongside the diving support vessel, "D-THUNDERBALL" which had on board rubber tire fenders which spread the fire, and oxygen cylinders which exploded in the heat.

The aluminum deck house and most of the interior of the "D-THUNDERBALL" were destroyed by the fire and the "NORTH SIDE" was also severely damaged. However, both hulls remained afloat. Fortunately, the diesel fuel on both vessels did not catch fire.

The fire was extinguished at 0700. Haldimand-Norfolk Regional Police took some items from the "NORTH SIDE" for evidence.

There were no deaths or injuries,and no pollution.

Analysis

1. The Lake Erie smelt fishery at Port Dover employs a number of fishing vessels which operate on a daily basis with the crews returning to their homes each evening. The vessels are left unattended during the night and there are no restrictions on persons having access to the dock area.

2. An employee in a fish plant observed at about 2000, from his office window, a light in the wheel-house of the "NORTH SIDE" and a person moving about. As a crew member was known to have lived aboard the vessel previously, the observer thought that it was not unusual and paid no more attention to it, neither could he identify this person.

3. Following the fire, the owner of "NORTH SIDE" suggested that the Ontario Fire Marshall be called in, but in this case, this advice was not taken as no injuries or deaths were involved. Although fires on board vessels are not their specific responsibility, the Ontario Fire Marshall's office, if informed, will examine fires involving:

   - fatalities,
   - explosions,
   - loss in excess of $0.5 million, and
   - suspicion as to origin.

4. The "D-THUNDERBALL" was unattended in the hours before the fire.

5. The Marine Casualty Investigations Division of Transport Canada was not informed until the next day, November 27, by which time, on arrival of the Investigating Officer, all the evidence of the cause of fire had been removed.

6. The block heater was removed from the diesel engine and, together with the remnants of the shore extension wire, propane heater stove and fuse box, were sent to the Canadian Aviation Safety Engineering Laboratory for evaluation and elimination as sources of ignition.

7. The Shipping Casualties Reporting Regulations require ... the person responsible for the ship ... report the incident

without delay ... if the report cannot be communicated by radio ... by telephone to the local Canadian radio ship reporting station. (See Annex I).

8. Weather

The weather during the night was reported to be wind N.N.E 30 mph and air temperature 0°C. There may have been some freezing rain.

9. Possible Sources of Fire

a. Electricity supply - the extension lead from the 120V shore receptacle, on inspection, was reported to show typical signs of arcing as a result of a fire burning the circuit. The electric wiring on board was properly installed with fuses and the fuses were not blown. The block heater was in good condition.

b. Electricity Supply Pedestal - on inspection by Ontario Hydro it was found in the distribution section that the 30 amp receptacles had been disconnected and the 15 amp receptacles had been connected to the 30 amp circuit breakers. This arrangement was in violation of the Electrical Safety Code, and had potential for problems, but tests on the extension wire to the "NORTH SIDE" proved the wrong connection was not a factor in this incident.

c. It is considered that the interference with the electricity supply pedestal had been effected by a previous lessee of the berth and the owner of "NORTH SIDE" would not have used it if he had known it was faulty.

d. Propane heater stove - the remnants of the propane heater stove, on inspection, yielded no suggestion of a malfunction. The stove was supplied by the gas company and was kept in good condition, and there was no mechanism to malfunction.

e. Arson - There had been several unsolved fires in the area, and one on a fishing vessel, the "H. H. MISNER" in Port Dover on December 5, 1984 when the vessel was found to be on fire when the crew joined at 0730. The reason was thought then to be careless smoking by an intruder.

10. Combustibles - aboard "NORTH SIDE"

In steel deck house

Gasoline in tank of general service pump

1 gallon of gasoline in 2 gallon jerry can

Empty 2 gallon jerry can
Gasoline in tank of trawl winch

In wheel-house
1 gallon vegetable oil for sea anchor
12 distress flares in can
Wooden floor, bench deck, steps
4 lifejackets
plastic sea anchor
ropes

On top of house
propane tank

On deck
mooring ropes
polypropylene mooring ropes
trawl winch engine gas tank
5 plastic fish totes filled with ice
5 empty fish totes
fish boxes

11. The fuel tanks and diesel oil on both vessels were not burned. The aluminum deck house and most of the equipment above deck on the "D-THUNDERBALL" was destroyed. The "D-THUNDERBALL" was a constructive total loss at $0.5 million.

The deck house and fishing gear of the "NORTH SIDE" was destroyed leaving only the hull intact; damage loss was estimated at $75,000.

Findings

The FV "NORTH SIDE" caught fire early on the morning of November 26, 1985 while unattended at her berth, and the mooring ropes were burned through leaving the vessel free to drift across the dock.

It would appear that:

- the cause of the origin of the fire on the "NORTH SIDE" could not be ascertained;
- the burning "NORTH SIDE" drifted to the south and lay alongside the diving support vessel "D-THUNDERBALL" which was secured unattended at the north side of the east breakwater; and
- the flames on "NORTH SIDE" spread to the "D-THUNDERBALL".

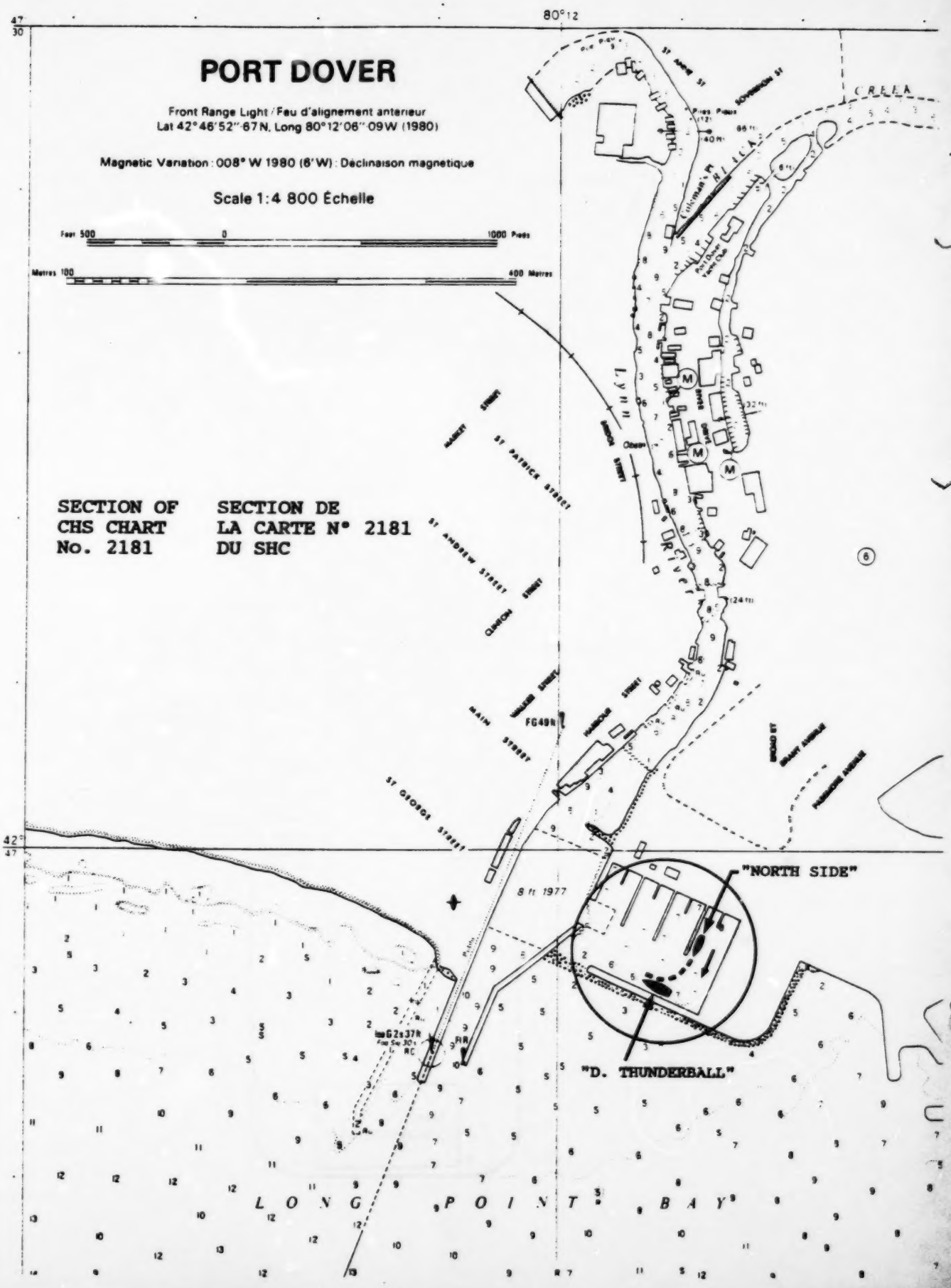
Other Findings

The Fire Department responded promptly and extinguished the fires on both vessels.

The Marine Casualty Investigations Division was not made aware of the fire until much of the evidence which may have been useful in establishing the cause of the fire on "NORTH SIDE" was obliterated when the burnt out ashes were cleaned up.

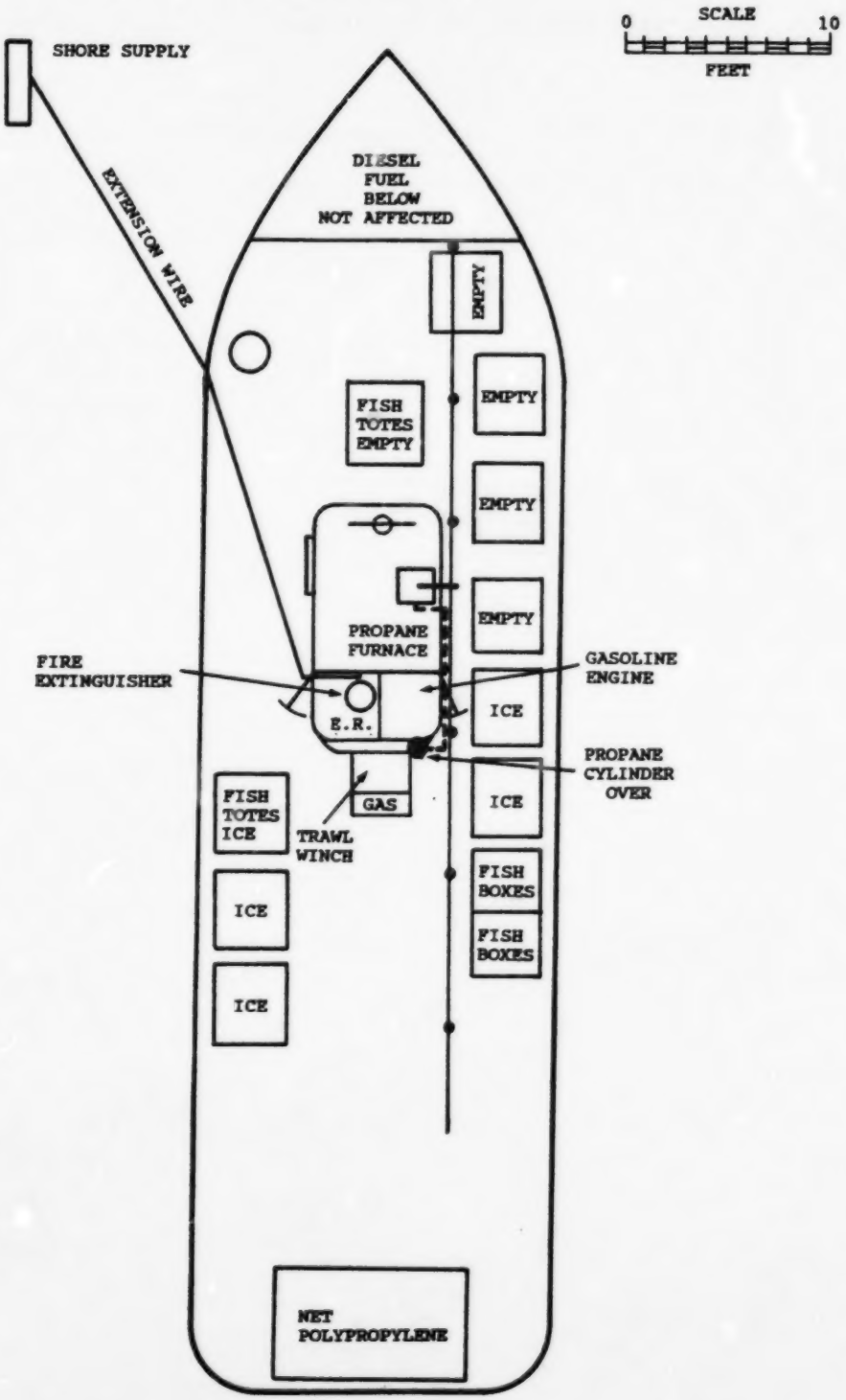
The Ontario Fire Marshall's office was not summoned and this specialised expertise was, therefore, also not available to the investigation.

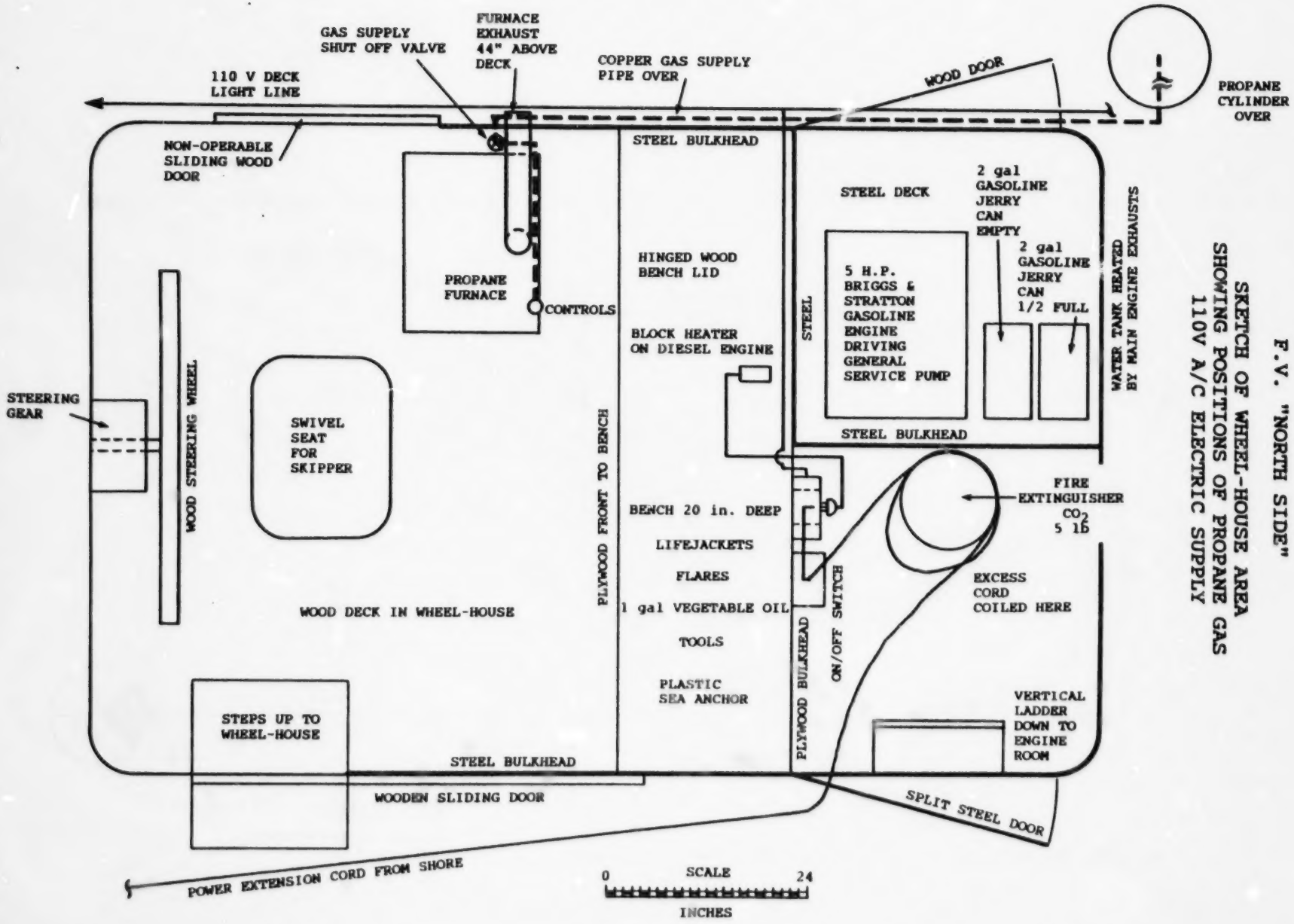
OTTAWA, ONTARIO
MAY 1987.


80°12
47
30
PORT DOVER
Front Range Light / Feu d'alignement antérieur
Lat 42°46'52"·67N, Long 80°12'06"·09W (1980)
Magnetic Variation : 008° W 1980 (6'W) : Déclinaison magnétique
Scale 1:4 800 Échelle
Feet 500 0 1000 Feet
Metres 100 400 Metres
SECTION OF CHS CHART No. 2181
SECTION DE LA CARTE N° 2181 DU SHC
CREEK
Lynn River
MARKET STREET
ST PATRICK STREET
ST ANDREW STREET
CLARENCE STREET
MAIN STREET
ST GEORGE STREET
FG49R
8 ft 1977
"NORTH SIDE"
"D. THUNDERBALL"
G2s37R
LONG POINT BAY
42
47

F.V. "NORTH SIDE"

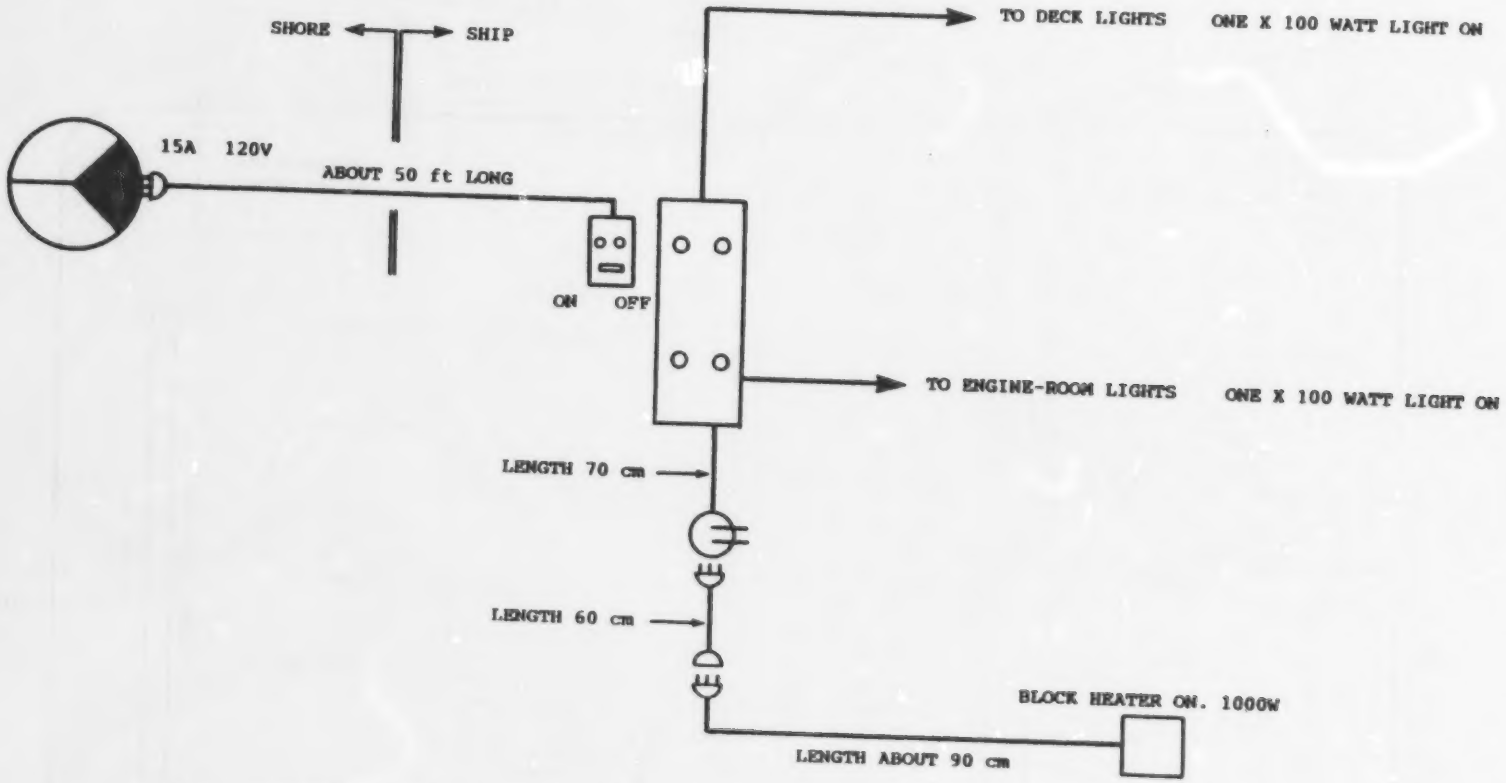
PLAN OF MAIN DECK





F.V. "NORTH SIDE"

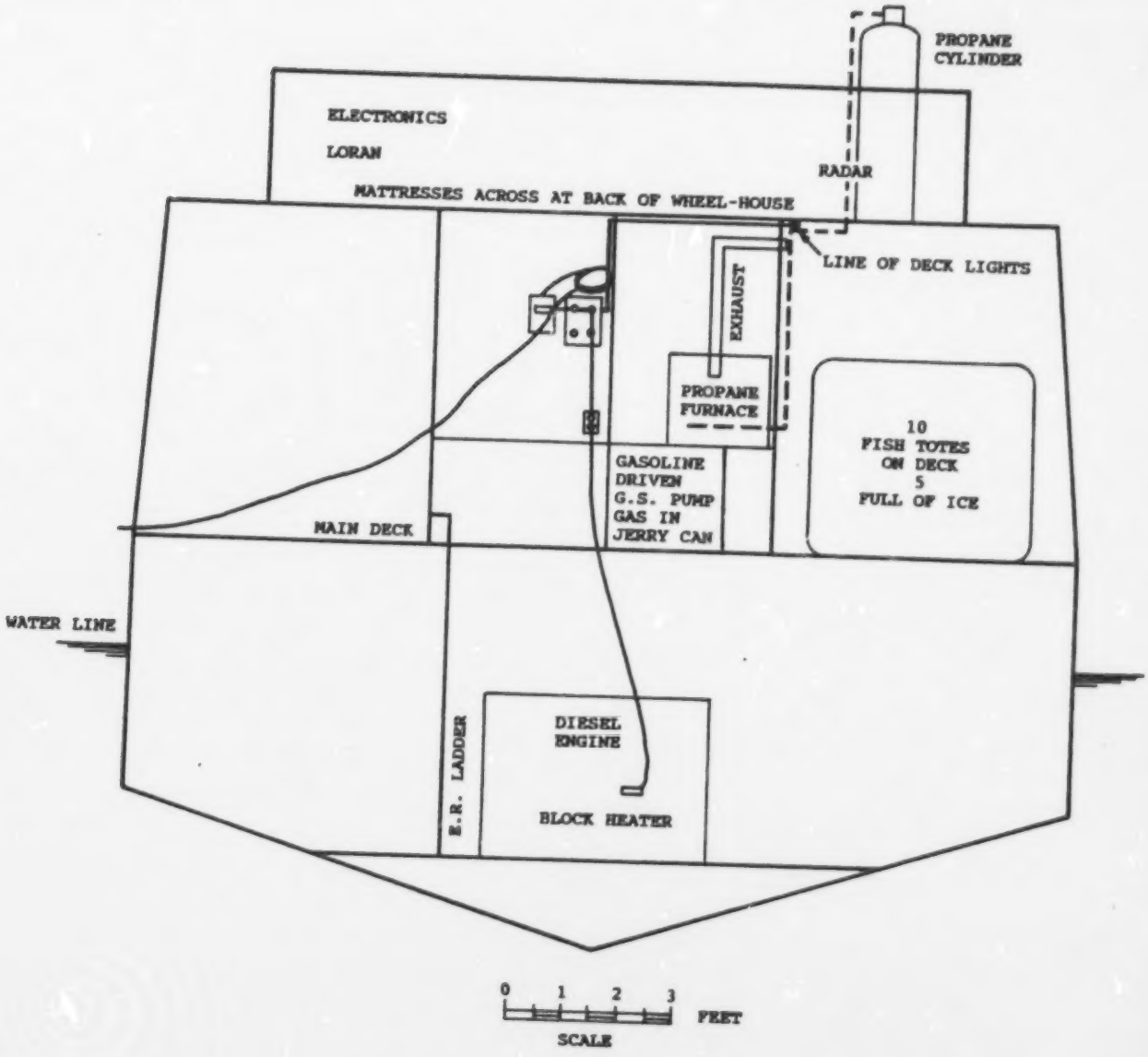
SKETCH OF WHEEL-HOUSE AREA
SHOWING POSITIONS OF PROPANE GAS
110V A/C ELECTRIC SUPPLY



F.V. "NORTH SIDE"

SKETCH OF A/C POWER SUPPLY LINES

NOTE: The "NORTH SIDE" has a 32V circuit separate from the 32V circuit powered by a generator on the main engine. There is no connection between the two systems.

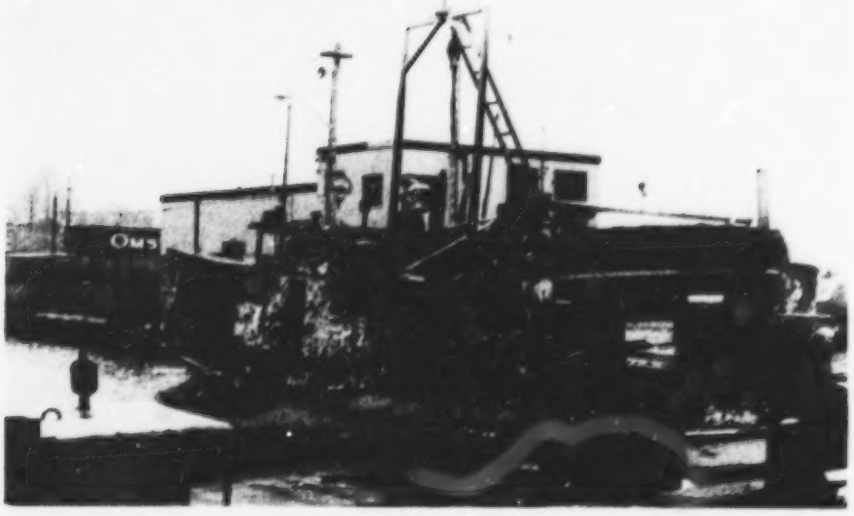


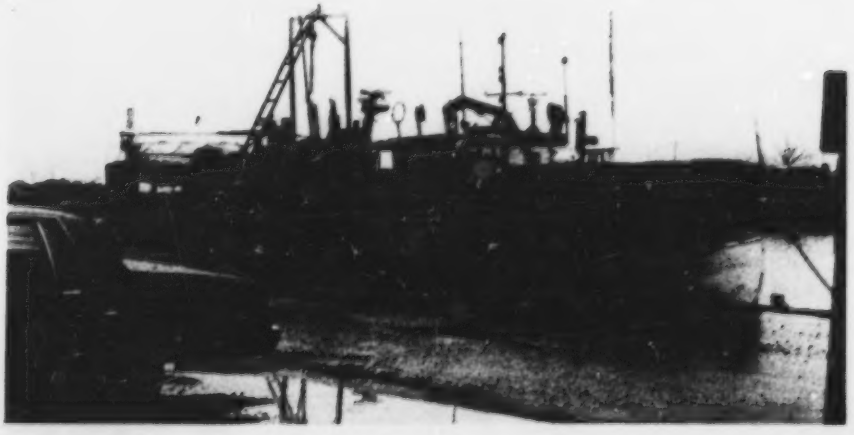
F.V. "NORTH SIDE"

SKETCH OF MIDSHIP SECTION
LOOKING FORWARD

F.V. "NORTH SIDE"
after fire.

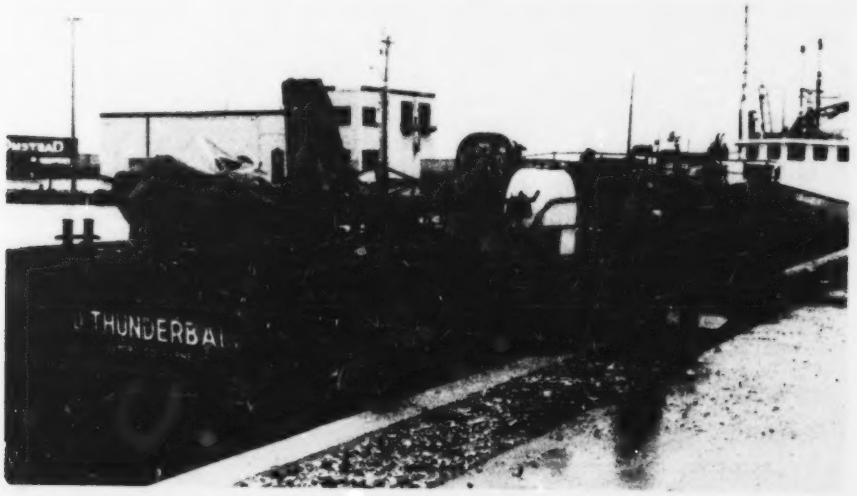
B.P. "NORTH SIDE"
après l'incendie.

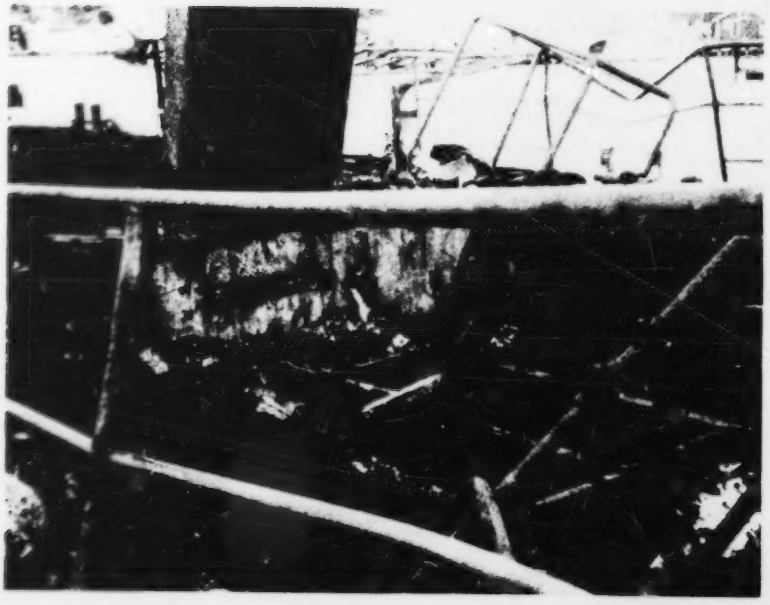




"D - THUNDERBALL"
after fire.

"D - THUNDERBALL"
après l'incendie.



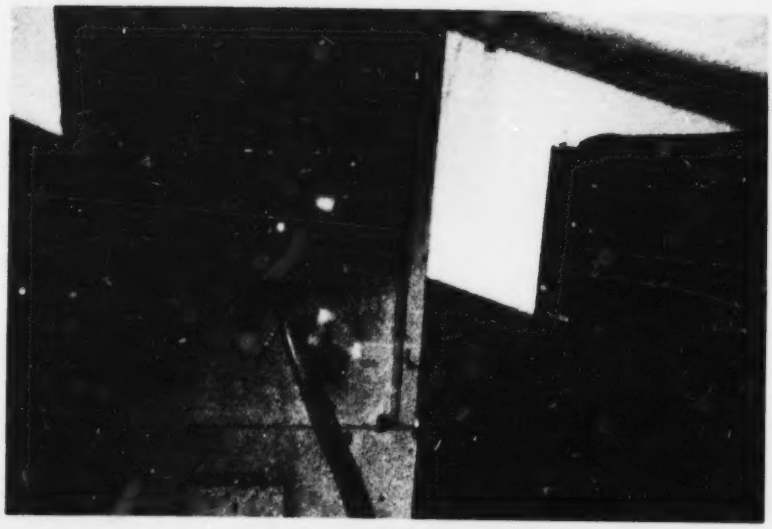


Remains of
aluminum
house.

Les restants
du rouf
en aluminium.

Shore power supply pedestal Port Dover.

Socle de l'alimentation à quai- Port Dover.



"NORTH SIDE" fuse boxes.

"NORTH SIDE" coffrets à fusibles.

"NORTH SIDE" propane stove.

"NORTH SIDE" fourneau au propane.